

South fork of the *S**nake river* fee proposal

may 1997

South Fork of the Snake River Fee Proposal

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one Introduction

IN MAY 1996, THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS authorized the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program by passing the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 for the Department of Interior and related agencies (Public Law 104-134).

The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program is designed to test different methods of collecting user fees at recreation sites on public lands and to determine whether they are an efficient and effective mechanism to fund the operation, maintenance, and enhancement of the areas where they are collected. The program allows the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct tests at up to 100 recreation sites per agency across the country.

The Recreation Fee Demonstration program authorizes the agencies to collect fees from individuals and groups for admission to an area or for use of outdoor recreation sites, facilities, visitor centers, equipment, and services. Agency managers have the flexibility to determine appropriate fees and collection methods for each area. At new fee sites, 100% of the monies collected can be used to operate, maintain, repair, and improve recreation facilities; enhance wildlife habitat; protect natural resources; and improve visitor services, such as interpretation, signs, and law enforcement.

two Development of the South Fork of the Snake River Fee Proposal

IN THE FALL OF 1996, AN INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP was formed to develop a coordinated proposal to charge fees at recreation sites within the South Fork of the Snake River corridor. The working group, comprised of representatives of the county, state, and federal government agencies responsible for management of recreation access sites along the South Fork of the Snake River corridor, includes the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville County, Jefferson County, Madison County, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation also participates as a partner in this project.

In December 1996, the South Fork of the Snake River Corridor, which includes ten recreation sites located between Palisades Dam and Mike Walker Boat ramp near Roberts, was selected as a pilot test site.

This document provides information about the proposal to charge fees at the recreation sites located on the South Fork of the Snake River. The interagency working group intends to gather public input on the proposal, make any necessary adjustments based on comments received, and begin collecting fees July 1, 1997.

three *Public Input Opportunities*

THE INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP IS INTERESTED IN LEARNING what the public thinks and how the public feels about the South Fork of the Snake River fee proposal. The working group will accept comments on the draft plan through May 30, 1997. The public may provide input using the comment sheet on page 8 of this document or by writing a letter. Comments may be sent to any of the agencies listed on page 9. An open house will be held on Tuesday, May 20, from 2:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m., to enable the public to obtain more information about the South Fork of the Snake River fee proposal and express their thoughts and feelings about it to members of the working group. The open house will be held in the Alexander D. Creek Classroom/Laboratory of the Eastern Idaho Technical College, 1600 South 2500 East, located one block north of the intersection of East 17th Street and Hitt Road, in Idaho Falls. In addition, the interagency working group will continue to solicit public input throughout the life of the pilot program and make any necessary adjustments when drafting annual operating plans. At the end of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program in 1999, the agencies will report the results, as well as recommendations, to Congress. Congress will then determine the future direction for federal agencies in collecting fees at recreation areas on public lands.

four *South Fork of the Snake River Fee Proposal*

A. DESCRIPTION OF FEE SITES

The interagency working group proposes charging a fee to park a motorized vehicle, or use the facilities, at any of the following ten river recreation sites from July 1 through September 30 for 1997 and from May 24 through September 30 during the 1998 and 1999 seasons: Palisades, Palisades Creek (Husky), Spring Creek, Conant, Fulmer (Cottonwood), Byington (Poplar), Twin Bridges, Lorenzo, Menan, and Mike Walker. See page 3 for a description of the site facilities.

table one

Proposed fee sites: facilities & services

SITES	RESTROOMS	BOAT LAUNCH	PARKING AREA	BOAT DOCKS	FISHING RAMP/DOCK	STAGING		
Palisades	Vault	Concrete	x					
Palisades Cr	Vault	Concrete	x	x	accessible			
Spring Cr	Vault	Concrete	x					
Conant	Flush/Vault	Concrete (boat) Raft	x	x		x		
Fullmer (Cottonwood)	Portable	Concrete						
Byington (Poplar)	Vault	Concrete (boat) Raft	x	x	accessible	x		
Twin Bridges	Vault	Concrete	x					
Lorenzo	Portable	Informal	x					
Menan	Vault	Concrete	x					
Mike Walker	Vault	Concrete	x	x				
SITES	CAMPING	GARBAGE PICKUP	DUMP STATION	PICNIC AREA	DRINKING WATER	VIEWING AREAS	HOSTS	VISITOR CENTER
Palisades			x					
Palisades Cr	Designated							
Spring Cr		x						
Conant				x	x	x	x	x
Fullmer (Cottonwood)	Dispersed							
Byington (Poplar)		x	x	x	x			
Twin Bridges								
Lorenzo								
Menan								
Mike Walker	Dispersed			x				

B. FEES

1. FACILITY USE AND PARKING FEE

A "Facility Use and Parking Fee" is proposed for using the facilities or for parking a motorized vehicle at any of the recreation sites listed in Section A. If the boat launch or other site facilities, including boat ramps, fishing docks, and picnic tables, are used or if a vehicle is parked within a site, a fee would be charged. Each vehicle left parked in a site would have to display a current season pass on the driver's side, front window of the vehicle or a daily fee permit receipt on the front dash.

2. DAILY USE PERMIT OPTION

A fee of \$3.00 per vehicle would be required to use any of the ten sites listed in Section A for the period of one day or portion thereof. Users would enter the site, locate the fee station, complete the required information on the fee envelope, put \$3.00 in the envelope, tear the attached stub from the envelope as their receipt, and then deposit the envelope in the fee vault. Users would then display their receipt on the dash of their vehicle in a visible location. Daily passes would not be transferrable or refundable.

3. SEASON PASS OPTION

A season pass would be available for purchase by the general public for \$30.00. Any licensed commercial guide working for one of the eight South Fork of the Snake River outfitters would be charged \$40 for a season pass. The season pass would authorize unlimited use of all facilities at any South Fork of the Snake River fee site for the period of one season. The season pass would be sold in the form of a clear static cling sticker. The sticker would have to be displayed on the driver's side windshield of the vehicle. The season pass would be removable and could be used between two (2) vehicles owned and registered by the purchaser of the pass. When purchasing a season pass, the user would be asked to provide vehicle registration information for the vehicles they would be using at the South Fork of the Snake River recreation sites.

The pass would be available at the Eastern Idaho Visitor Information Center in Idaho Falls and the U.S. Forest Service Palisades Ranger District Office on State Highway 26. Those wishing to purchase a season pass could either walk in and make the purchase or they could send a check or money order to the Eastern Idaho Visitor Information Center and receive their pass through the mail. Credit cards would not be accepted. A user who loses a season pass would be able to get a replacement pass at a cost of \$10.00. Season passes would not be transferrable or refundable.

4. PERSONAL SHUTTLE OF TWO VEHICLES

Users who shuttle their own vehicles, e.g. park one vehicle at Byington and one at Conant, would have to purchase either two (2) season passes, two (2) daily permits, or have a combination of a daily pass and a season pass. In short, each vehicle parked within a site would have to display either a season pass or daily permit.

5. TEMPORARY USE OF A SITE (15 MINUTES OR LESS)

Visitors who drive through a site but do not stop to utilize facilities *would not* be required to pay a fee. Visitors who enter a site temporarily (15 minutes or less) for the purpose of a “rest stop,” that is to stretch, look around, and use the restroom, will be provided an opportunity to donate money for maintenance of the facility. This type of temporary use would most likely be focused on Conant Boat Access. A donation box would be constructed adjacent to the vault toilets. If this type of use occurred on other sites, similar donation boxes would be constructed. Visitors who stop to picnic, or go fishing, or otherwise take up a parking space for more than 15 minutes would have to complete a daily fee permit and deposit the \$3.00 fee.

6. GOLDEN AGE/GOLDEN ACCESS

Golden Age and Golden Access passes would be accepted. For information concerning purchase and use of passes, please call the Eastern Idaho Visitor Center at (208) 523-1012.

C. COMPLIANCE

The following procedures would be followed for noncompliance with the fee requirement:

- If a vehicle was observed at any of the ten fee sites without a season pass on the windshield or a daily receipt stub displayed on the dash, the employee making the observation would insert a daily fee envelope under the windshield wiper of the vehicle along with a written message explaining the fee requirement. The employee would record the license and vehicle description. If the same vehicle was observed a second time with no proof of fee paid, a citation could be issued in the amount of \$42.50 by Bonneville County, Madison County, or Jefferson County, or \$50.00 by the BLM or U.S. Forest Service.

- If a vehicle is observed utilizing the facilities of a site (e.g. launching a boat) and attempting to leave the site without paying the fee (e.g. trying to park out on the county road), the person driving the vehicle may be issued a verbal or written warning for failure to comply with the fee requirement. If they are stopped a second time for failure to pay the fee, a citation could be issued.

- All county, state, and federal vehicles would be exempt from the fee requirement when being used for official duties such as site maintenance, river corridor projects, research efforts, etc.

D. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

All fees collected at recreation sites in the South Fork of the Snake River Corridor would be deposited in a local account. The Bureau of Land Management, which would act as the lead administrative agency, would complete a financial statement that details the amount of fees and the site where they were collected for the season by mid-October of each year. The interagency working group would meet in November of each year to discuss and prioritize operation and maintenance needs for the following season and determine appropriate distribution of funds. The working group would assess the needs of the corridor as a whole, rather than focusing on particular recreation sites. The goal would be to maintain or improve the quality of facilities at all of the recreation sites. Therefore, fees collected at Conant, for example, may also be used to maintain or improve facilities at Twin Bridges or other South Fork fee sites.

A portion of the funds, not to exceed 20% of the total fees collected, would also be used to meet administrative needs. Allowable administrative costs would include: fee station maintenance (fee vault and signing), annual sticker costs, daily fee envelope costs, printing and advertising costs, and seasonal labor costs to collect fees and provide compliance.

If funds remain in the account following distribution for administrative and fixed maintenance costs, the interagency working group would determine a priority improvement project(s) to fund. BLM would prepare an annual report for the public that itemizes all costs involved with administering the program and clearly documents the expenditure of collected fees.

E. PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The agencies would develop a feedback mechanism to measure customer satisfaction and public opinion. This mechanism could include tools, such as a comment sheet, customer survey, etc.

The agencies would evaluate the costs and benefits of the program with the objective of collecting, at a minimum, sufficient funds to support fixed maintenance costs of all sites in the South Fork project. For example, fixed maintenance costs may include the cost of pumping toilets, collecting trash, purchasing cleaning supplies, providing and maintaining boat docks, and providing day-to-day maintenance of project facilities.

The agencies would explore other innovative cost saving measures, such as consolidated contracts for trash pickup, toilet pumping, sharing of equipment and personnel, etc.

five Questions and Answers

1. How did you determine the proposed \$3.00 daily and \$30.00 annual amounts?

The interagency working group used a calculation method called "Fair Market Value." Essentially, the interagency working group looked at comparable recreation fees charged by private and public agencies within the region, as well as nationally. The interagency working group then determined a fee that was within the upper and lower limits of both private and public recreation sites that are currently charging fees. The interagency working group also took into consideration direct and indirect costs to the agencies, benefits to the user, and the administrative feasibility of fee collection.

2. Powerboat users currently pay a fee to license their boat, and a portion of that fee may be used to develop access on waterways. Will powerboat users pay a reduced fee?

No. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Board granted the agencies approval to charge fees at sites where Waterway Grant funds were used to assist in construction and development. Further, it was determined to be administratively infeasible to mitigate specifically for just one of the many user groups that use the facilities. To be administratively efficient and as equitable as possible, it was determined that all users should pay the fee.

3. Some of the recreation sites in the South Fork of the Snake River Corridor have minimal facilities available, and some of the facilities are in poor shape. How can you charge a fee on those sites?

In an effort to provide consistent facilities and services for South Fork of the Snake River users, the agencies are looking at the corridor as a whole system, rather than focusing on particular recreation sites. Our goal is to maintain or improve the quality of facilities at all the listed sites. Thus money received at Conant, for example, may also be used to upgrade facilities at Twin Bridges or Palisades Dam or to improve facilities at Lorenzo.

4. What is the present cost of maintaining facilities within the project corridor, and how much revenue do you expect to generate from this program?

The agencies do not have specific cost data at this time. We will track this cost during the 1997 use season and have that figure available in November. We expect to generate \$50,000 in fee revenue during the course of a "normal" season, however, factors such as high water and weather may cause this estimate to be much lower or higher during any given year.

Comment Sheet

After you have read this document or attended the public open house, please fill out this sheet and hand deliver, fax, or mail it to any of the members of the interagency working group listed on page 9.

Indicate your level of agreement with each of the following elements of the fee collection proposal by circling the appropriate response.

- 1** The proposed fee of \$3.00 per vehicle per day to park a motorized vehicle or use the facilities at any of the 10 recreation sites on the South Fork of the Snake River is:

Too Low About Right Too High

If you selected "too low" or "too high," what do you think would be an appropriate daily use fee?

- 2** The proposed fee of \$30.00 for a season pass for the general public is:

Too Low About Right Too High

If you selected "too low" or "too high," what do you think would be an appropriate season pass fee?

- 3** The proposed fee of \$40.00 for a season pass for the 8 licensed outfitters and the guides they employ is:

Too Low About Right Too High

If you selected "too low" or "too high," what do you think would be an appropriate season pass fee?

- 4** The proposed method of paying the daily fee is:

Very Inconvenient Convenient Very Convenient

If you selected "very inconvenient," what do you think would be an easier way to pay the daily fee?

- 5** The proposed method of purchasing a season pass is:

Very Inconvenient Convenient Very Convenient

If you selected "very inconvenient," what do you think would be an easier way to purchase a season pass?

- 6** After fixed maintenance costs are covered, if there are enough funds to improve facilities, what kind of improvements would you like to see at what recreation sites?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Please let us know what your concerns or suggestions are regarding this proposal. Use additional pages if necessary.

Send your comments on *South Fork of the Snake River Fee Proposal* to any of the following individuals. Comments must be postmarked no later than May 30, 1997.

WADE BROWN

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KEN STROMBERG

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BRENT PORTER

USDA Forest Service
Palisades Ranger District
3659 E. Ririe Highway
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401
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BROOKE PASSEY

Madison County Commissioner
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BILL SHURTLEFF

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JIM TAUL

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Bonneville County Courthouse
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STEVE SCHMIDT

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MARK BRANDT

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